

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the claims, including all prior versions, with the listing of claims found below.

#### Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A central management apparatus for managing devices connected to device management units by data communication with the device management units, the central management apparatus comprising:

a memory for storing ~~[the]~~ a fixed-time transmission time determined for each device;

a setting ~~means-unit~~ for setting an allowable time for each device or each device management unit connected to the devices based on ~~the~~ a communication method of each device management unit; and

a determination ~~means-unit~~ for determining that a device that has not transmitted data until the allowable time has elapsed after the fixed-time stored in memory is a non-communicating device.

2. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:

a fixed-time transmission time setting ~~means-unit~~ for setting ~~[the]~~ a next fixed-time transmission time for each device; and

a transmission ~~means-unit~~ for transmitting the set fixed-time transmission time to the device management unit connected to each device.

3. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 2, wherein ~~said the~~ fixed-time transmission time setting ~~means-unit~~ sets the next fixed-time transmission time in accordance with the respective communication method of the connected device management unit.

4. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 2,

wherein ~~said the~~ fixed-time transmission time setting ~~means-unit~~ allots an earlier time to devices having ~~a long~~ an allowable time set by the setting ~~means-unit~~ which is longer than devices having ~~an~~ a short allowable time that is shorter.

5. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein ~~said the~~ communication ~~methods including~~method includes a first method for transmitting data over a public telephone line, and a second method for transmitting data by electronic mail over the internet.

6. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 5, wherein ~~said the~~ setting ~~means-unit~~ sets the allowable time of the device management unit using the first method of communication ~~so as~~ to be shorter than the allowable time of the device management unit using the second method of communication.

7. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said devices are image forming apparatuses.

8. (Currently amended) A central management apparatus for managing devices connected to device management units by data communication with first and second device management units using different communication methods, the central management apparatus comprising:

a memory for storing a first transmission time set for the first device management unit and a second transmission time set for the second device management unit;

a first counting ~~means-unit~~ for counting ~~the~~ elapsed time from the first transmission time when data have not been received from the first device management unit at the first transmission time;

a second counting ~~means-unit~~ for counting ~~the~~ elapsed time from the second transmission time when data have not been received from the second device management unit at the second transmission time;

a threshold setting ~~means-unit~~ for setting a first threshold value for the first device management unit and setting a second threshold value different from the first threshold value for the second device management unit; and

a determining ~~means-unit~~ for determining a no reception condition when the ~~counted~~ elapsed time counted by the first counting ~~means-unit~~ exceeds the first threshold value or the ~~counted~~ elapsed time counted by the second counting ~~means-unit~~ exceeds the second threshold value.

9. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, further comprising:

a fixed-time transmission time setting ~~means-unit~~ for setting the next fixed-time transmission time for each device; and

a transmission ~~means-unit~~ for transmitting the set fixed-time transmission time to the device management unit connected to each device.

10. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein ~~said the~~ fixed-time transmission time setting ~~means-unit~~ sets the next fixed-time transmission time in accordance with ~~the~~ a respective communication method of the connected device management unit.

11. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 9, wherein ~~said the~~ fixed-time transmission time setting ~~means-unit~~ allots an earlier time to devices having an ~~a long~~-allowable time set by the setting ~~means-unit~~ which is longer than devices having a ~~short~~ an allowable time which is shorter.

12. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the communication method of the first device management unit is a method for transmitting data over a public telephone line, and the communication method of the second device management unit is a method for transmitting data by electronic mail over the internet.

13. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 12, wherein ~~said-the~~ threshold setting ~~means-unit~~ sets the threshold value of the first device management unit so as to be shorter than the threshold value of the second device management unit.

14. (Currently amended) ~~A~~The central management apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein ~~said-the~~ devices are image forming apparatuses.

15. (Currently amended) A management system including a central management apparatus, a first device management unit for data communication with the central management apparatus using a first communication method, and a second device management unit for data communication with the central management apparatus using a second communication method, ~~said-the~~ first device management unit comprising:

a first transmission ~~means-unit~~ for transmitting data relating to a connected device to the central management apparatus at a first fixed time,

~~said-the~~ second device management unit comprising:

a second transmission ~~means-unit~~ for transmitting data relating to a connected device to the central management apparatus at a second fixed time,

~~said-the~~ central management apparatus comprising:

a memory for storing a first transmission time set for the first device management unit and a second transmission time set for the second device management unit;

a first counting ~~means-unit~~ for counting ~~the~~ elapsed time from the first transmission time when data have not been received from the first device management unit at the first transmission time;

a second counting ~~means-unit~~ for counting ~~the~~ elapsed time from the second transmission time when data have not been received from the second device management unit at the second transmission time;

a threshold setting ~~means-unit~~ for setting a first threshold value for the first device management unit, and setting a second threshold value different from the first threshold value for the second device management unit; and

a determining ~~means-unit~~ for determining a no reception condition when the ~~counted~~-elapsed time counted by the first counting ~~means~~unit exceeds the first threshold value or the ~~counted~~-elapsed time counted by the second counting ~~means~~unit exceeds the second threshold value.

16. (Currently amended) A ~~The~~ management system as claimed in Claim 15, wherein ~~said~~the first communication method is a method for transmitting data over a public telephone line, and ~~said~~the second communication method is a method for transmitting data by electronic mail over the internet.

17. (Currently amended) A management system as claimed in Claim 16, wherein ~~said~~the threshold setting ~~means-unit~~ sets the threshold value of the first device management unit ~~so as~~ to be shorter than the threshold value of the second device management unit.

18. (Currently amended) A ~~The~~ management system as claimed in Claim 15, wherein ~~said~~the devices are image forming apparatuses.